

A HOME IS NOT A HOUSE

Please do raise the shade, but do not ask again: "How are we feeling today?"

One of us is achy-old; that did not change overnight.

Nor do days change: I mark the hours with pills,

Cobble together cross words and puzzles, catalog ironies.

I've grown adept at toenail Zen and hopper meditation....

Do you want to hear all this?

The sunroom runs on reruns.

Up on the screen: vacation videos of churches, faces and beaches;

At the tables: mossy tales with trite morals, hoary jokes.

After coffee I wade into a torrent of images and words,

Pecking out wisdom giblets to forward to folks

To whom this matters; although they hesitate to say so.

Fusillades of flatware cut the fog.

Reports of plate upon plate warn that lunch has thawed.

When we owned and were owned,

We were silken rugs, smoothed whiskey, redolent reds.

Our carved bed was wide, with a vista to the mainland.

We crossed continents, collected marquetry and ikat,

Lost contact, palavered and survived--with films to prove it.

Films with snapshots and journals

Now cramped in with images and letters of forebears

In a box under my narrow bed--

A capsule open to receive my times.

A few intimates, most alive, crowd the night stand

As though awaiting chairs.

We planned and planted, razed and built.

Here I do not bang nor pry nor screw anything.

Toggles fetch light or sound--never cutting or shaping.

No whirring or whining, risk or joy.

Outdoors I prune and gather to good effect,

But the bushes lack essential beauty: I did not choose them.

A brisk vestal pops in with a couple of ha-ha-has --

To which a lovey striper adds magazines and tra-la-las.

My shift here never ho-ho ends,

But at home surely they talk breasts and balls.

To vestals you are unfailing whatever you spew.

In this sanctuary it is forgiven to piss in your pew.

They are sisters, not mothers--never lovers.

What is my best line? "Please, wipe my chin again!"

They wash me daily, but only down to there.

Once, soaping together was a slow art.

Now the naughty box is locked and sealed seemly.

They mean well. We all do. Meaning to be mean is cast out.

Shriek out curses, bite hard twice...your brain is washed.

A ride is not a car.

The van runs from here to there--

No quick swings to the curb to chat with neighbors,

Flirt with ex-wife, first love...whoever is alive out there.

"Driver, just hang a left, pass GO,

Breeze through the countryside--blow air through our hair!"

"So, you'd like to visit the mountains? the sea?

We'll see if enough others sign up."

There is a curtain between us now.

My hands are mitts that touch but do not feel.

You know this.

I hug your living body in order to stand,

But I cannot animate it or detain you for long.

I accept that.

This is not your first last look--only the latest.

Perhaps I am having a last look.

You never know.

Certainly, I do not know.

Do the kids keep in touch?

Do they, really?

Passion, crafting, gestures at the world

Dwindle to protocols, immutable and safe.

I cloak myself in schedules of meals, pills, visits.

I've already said this, I think.

I draw these rounds around me and lay me down.

Memories, barely sensed, scurry into the tangles--

Faces scarcely glimpsed.

Was I very unkind just now,

Or is that yesterday...tomorrow?

Tell me: How can I know that I am good if I must always act nice?

Why did I come here, remain here...why?

Are these childish questions? Am I childish?

Just tell me: Should I grant you power of eternity?

(c) 2013 by
Paul L. DeVore